

PUGET SOUND ADVOCATES FOR RETIREMENT ACTION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**FRIEDA TAKAMURA OF PUGET SOUND ADVOCATES FOR RETIREMENT ACTION,
WASHINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

INTERVIEWEE: Frieda Takamura

INTERVIEWERS: Angie Bartels, Karen Richter

SUBJECTS: Japan, Japanese-Americans, immigration, World War II, US occupation of Japan, Japanese-American internment, US Department of Defense, US military, Whitman College, Walla Walla, social justice, teachers, education, teachers' unions, Washington Education Association, Renton, teacher strikes, racial justice, students of color, Tony Lee, Asian Americans, Asian American and Pacific Islander community, achievement gap, education policy, LGBT rights, LGBT students, Robby Stern, allyship, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action, women activists

LOCATION: Seattle, Washington, USA

DATE: February 25, 2019

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:59:43

FILE NAME: TakamuraFrieda_PSARA_2019_audio.wav

Angie Bartels 00:00:03

Today is Monday, February 25, 2019. We are at the offices of the Washington State Labor Council in Seattle, Washington. My name is Angie Bartels. I'm a member of PSARA [Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action]. With me is Karen Richter, also a member of PSARA, and we are interviewing Frieda Takamura, who is also a member of PSARA. And this of course, is for the PSARA Oral History Project.

Karen Richter 00:00:36

So welcome, Frieda.

Frieda Takamura 00:00:38

Thank you.

Karen Richter 00:00:40

Could you--

Angie Bartels 00:00:42

If I didn't state your complete name, could you do that for us?

Frieda Takamura 00:00:47

Well, my middle name, my name is Frieda Kikuyo Takamura.

Karen Richter 00:00:52

Could you spell your middle name?

Frieda Takamura 00:00:55

K-I-K-U-Y-O.

Karen Richter 00:00:57

Thank you.

Frieda Takamura 00:00:58

It's a very difficult name for, you know, white tongues to pronounce.

Karen Richter 00:01:01

Yes. That's fine.

Frieda Takamura 00:01:03

Yes. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:01:04

Totally! (laughs) And tell us a little bit about your family history, like maybe start with your grandparents, perhaps. Tell us where they were from, a little bit about their background, and anything that you feel is important as it pertains to your life, your grandparents, your parents.

Frieda Takamura 00:01:29

Well, I have, obviously, two sets of grandparents. On my mother's side, they--Well, both of them are Japanese. My father, though, was Japanese American, and there's a big difference there. But anyway, so my mother's side of the family is from Japan, still in Japan, never left Japan. She was born in Japan and then became a naturalized citizen--US citizen--when I was in high school, I think, there about. My father's family were immigrants to Hawaii, and so his mother and father both emigrated to Hawaii--let's see I'm trying to think--in the early 1900s. And so my grandfather came over to work as a tailor in Hawaii. And then my--that's again on my father's side. My grandmother's family, they were there as field workers, you know, in the sugarcane factory and pineapple--I mean, sugarcane fields and pineapple fields. But she, interestingly enough, was born in Hawaii, but then sent back to Japan for finishing her education. And then so she was in Japan and my father's family--my grandfather's family, and her family knew each other and he needed a spouse, and so she became a picture bride for him.

Angie Bartels 00:03:10

Oh wow.

Frieda Takamura 00:03:10

And then, so they got married now, like I said, early 1900s, and he had a tailor business on Oahu and had nine children, of whom my father was the third son. And so in Japanese American culture, it's very important to note generations. So, you know, I'm getting warm... (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:03:39

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:03:41

So anyway, so my--they ran a tailoring business on Oahu, in Hawaii, and as I was saying, my mother--my dad's family's parents, were Issei, or first generation, which made my father second generation. And because in our culture, in Japanese American culture, it's very important to delineate what generation you are in this country, in the US. My father was the third son, and of course, in many ways in today as well, boys are certainly more, you

know, considered more important. And so he was the he was--no, he was the second son. I'm sorry, he was the second son. His older brother went to--well, they all grew up there, but then when he was ready for college, he was--and this was before World War II--he was sent back to Japan for his college education, because the system was considered to be more superior in Japan. And then my father's older, oldest sister, was sent back to Japan for her finishing school. And then the war broke out, World War II. And so he was there during the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he was already like 21 or 22. And he had wonderful, well, not wonderful, but stories, you know about that whole time. But what it ended up doing, of course, was separating the family, you know, where the two oldest were in Japan and the all the other siblings were in Hawaii. My father and his next younger brother, of course, were very, very anxious to prove that they were good Americans. So of course, they went into the military. My father was part of the MIS, so the military intelligence. MIS--the Military Intelligence Service--where he became an interpreter--well, a translator--for the American forces, you know, of Japanese messages because he was bilingual. And then my uncle, his younger brother, was part of the--no, hundredth battalion, I'm sorry, But these are all parts of, you know, Japanese American history that is very important, because of the need for all of us to prove that we were good Americans.

Angie Bartels 00:06:08

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:06:09

And then the six sisters all remained in Hawaii because they were much younger. And so my father was stationed in the Pacific Theater, if you will, and then when the war ended, he was sent to Japan as part of the occupation, under General MacArthur. And while there, he did a lot of translating, you know, for the Japanese and for the Americans, back and forth, and at that time, found out his older sister, the one who had been trapped in Japan, in essence, when the war started, he was able to locate her through an interpreter, a Japanese interpreter, and the interpreter was a newspaper reporter, who had been educated, ironically enough, in New York, but he was Japanese, he went to NYU [New York University], I think, had gone back to Japan because of the war, as well. But he was able to, you know, coincidentally find out that he was married to his older sister.

Angie Bartels 00:07:18

(Gasps) Oh wow.

Frieda Takamura 00:07:19

And so, you know, but they could not fraternize with the locals at that time. You know, the US forces couldn't. And of course, he looked like all, you know, the Japanese, but always in uniform, you know, US uniform, and all that. So, that's how my grandmother, my father's mother, found out that her oldest daughter was alive and well in Japan. You know, so there's just kind of a family story that's, yeah.

Karen Richter 00:07:49

That's a great story.

Angie Bartels 00:07:50

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:07:50

And then in the meanwhile, his older brother had actually become part of the kamikaze unit. He was a college student, so they were drafting everybody, you know, into the war effort, and he eventually died in Okinawa. So we never got to--I never got to meet him and my grandma, you know...

Karen Richter 00:08:10

It sounds like your family is very well educated, like everyone went to college?

Frieda Takamura 00:08:14

Well, that was the expectation, you know (laughs), except for the girls who were younger, you know, as it was, and also, because during the wartime, it just was not feasible. But yeah, it was a very, very high priority. So the first, let's see, 3-4-5 of the nine, went on to college.

Karen Richter 00:08:33

That's great.

Angie Bartels 00:08:36

Where were your grandparents and the younger siblings living during World War II? Did they remain in Oahu?

Frieda Takamura 00:08:44

Yeah, they were in Honolulu. No, none of the Japanese--I can't say none--most of the Japanese were not put into concentration camps during World War II, mainly because there were so many. And I swear, if all the Japanese

Americans or the Japanese were incarcerated, the whole island would have collapsed (laughs) because there was just so much infrastructure that the Japanese, some Japanese Americans, were supporting and maintaining.

Angie Bartels 00:09:11

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:09:12

So yeah, they were in Hawaii for the duration. Now, there were Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in Hawaii, but my family wasn't important enough. (laughs) You know, because they weren't teachers, they weren't religious leaders, they weren't considered to be important enough.

Angie Bartels 00:09:34

Oh, so in other words, teachers and other leaders of the community, Japanese American in Hawaii, were interned?

Frieda Takamura 00:09:46

Many, many of them.

Angie Bartels 00:09:46

Many of them were interned.

Frieda Takamura 00:09:47

Yes, they were.

Angie Bartels 00:09:48

Were they interned on the islands or were they brought back to the mainland?

Frieda Takamura 00:09:51

Both.

Angie Bartels 00:09:52

Both.

Frieda Takamura 00:09:52

Yeah, but there's--In fact, it's interesting because right now they're opening--they're just now starting to put together the camp where they were held in Hawaii, on Oahu, so it's an untold history, if you will.

Angie Bartels 00:10:09

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:10:10

And of course, most of the young Japanese American men were in the military, fighting for the US, you know, all over the world. So, yeah, it was a tough time that I think, helped to shape certainly the characters and, you know, what are the values of family and, ironically, that this country, the US, meant so much when such injustice was happening, yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:10:42

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:10:43

So for me, you know, as really the--and my mother, I should say, because she was Japanese, did not go through that, right, because she was Japanese. She went through many of the trials and tribulations of being in Japan during the war, but that was a whole--another story in itself. But in my family, we were always told that we were Americans first. And we would always never embarrass our people, meaning all Japanese, by being bad citizens.

Angie Bartels 00:11:18

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:11:19

Yeah, so...

Angie Bartels 00:11:20

Tell us a little bit about your mother and where she was during this period of time. Or, you know, like where she was--sounds like she was a field worker?

Frieda Takamura 00:11:31

No.

Angie Bartels 00:11:31

No, your mother was not. Then her parents were field workers?

Frieda Takamura 00:11:34

No, my father's mother's.

Angie Bartels 00:11:36

Oh okay. So your father's mother was a field worker. Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:11:39

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:11:39

So tell us about your mom, your mother.

Frieda Takamura 00:11:42

Well she, like I said, was, you know, in Japan the whole time. She was from a family that were mainly laborers. Her father died when my mother was, like, 10 years old, very young. And she had about four siblings, and so it was incumbent upon my grandmother on her side to work to support her children. And so, I mean, she was just--when she and my dad met, I think she was, like, in housekeeping at one of the military barracks, you know, because they hired a lot of the local folks. And so that's how they met.

Angie Bartels 00:12:28

Yeah. Did she talk much about the war and what it was like, living in Japan during that time, because, as many of us found out later, you know, in our adult life, the Japanese people suffered greatly during World War II.

Frieda Takamura 00:12:46

Right, big time. And she--Yes, I mean, that's, you know, in a word. She used to tell stories about how there was so little food that the young people, she included, would go up into the mountains and into the country to grab, gather apples, so that they could bring it back to the city, you know, where--that's what they survived on, because there was just so--there was nothing.

Angie Bartels 00:13:12

Right, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:13:13

And so when the Americans came in, you know, everybody was nervous, you know, what kind of--because, of course, I mean, Japan being you know, imperialist--imperialistic in Korea, in China, in, you know, across Asia, they didn't know how the Americans were going to be. But as it turned out--and I think my dad always used to say, the transition was smooth because of people like my dad, who spoke both languages, and who knew both cultures. You know, the example he used to give was, they took over a lot of the nobility and rich people's homes, the US Army did, to use as headquarters, to use his offices, you know, whatever. And Japanese homes, especially the, you know, the finer homes all had tatami mats, you know, the straw mats that were the floors. And of course, in Japan, you always take your shoes off, you know, before you go into a home. And so these officers American officers, US Army officers would come in and want to go into the homes with their shoes on, but it was people like my dad who said no, you can't do that. If you're going to do that you've got to cover all the tatami floors.

Karen Richter 00:14:29

So he taught the Americans Japanese culture?

Frieda Takamura 00:14:32

Exactly, because he knew both cultures.

Angie Bartels 00:14:35

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:14:36

And so he always used to say, you know, that the end of the war progressed a lot smoother because of people like my dad. And then, because I was fortunate enough to have a Japanese mother--and I was born in Japan right after the war--and so, I was fortunate enough that I grew up bilingually, unlike most Nisseis, Sanseis here in this country, you know, who were very eager to have their kids speak English only, you know, again, to prove they were Americans. But I couldn't communicate with my mother and she couldn't with us unless she spoke Japanese, so at home--and then my dad being bilingual was really helpful.

Angie Bartels 00:15:20

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:21

So the three of us, my two brothers, and I grew up in a bilingual home.

Angie Bartels 00:15:25

In Japan, starting in Japan?

Frieda Takamura 00:15:27

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:15:28

And when did your family come to the United States?

Frieda Takamura 00:15:33

Well, Hawaii is the United States. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:15:35

(laughs) Oh yeah, well I mean--I thought I meant it in Japan.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:39

Yeah, we were in Japan.

Angie Bartels 00:15:42

Yeah, so you were born in Japan.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:43

I was born in Japan.

Angie Bartels 00:15:44

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:44

In 1947.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:45

And then we came--I was the only one then. And so in 1949, when I was about two, we moved back to Hawaii.

Angie Bartels 00:15:45

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:15:54

Okay.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:55

The three of us.

Angie Bartels 00:15:55

Okay.

Frieda Takamura 00:15:56

And so my father then used the GI Bill to finish his education at the University of Hawaii. And then when he was looking for a full time job, he went--he joined up with the civil service, you know, Department of Defense. So he became a Department of Defense employee, and went back to Japan--to--Japan, at that time, so it was in about '52, it must have been. But in the meanwhile, my two brothers were born in Hawaii.

Angie Bartels 00:16:25

I see, okay. So your family kind of moved back and forth--

Frieda Takamura 00:16:28

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:16:29

From Japan to Hawaii?

Frieda Takamura 00:16:30

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:16:31

And now, while your dad--

Frieda Takamura 00:16:32

We were in Japan, till--Well, I left Japan when I graduated from high school.

Angie Bartels 00:16:37

Oh, so your family lived in Japan for several years?

Frieda Takamura 00:16:40

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:16:41

When your dad became an employee at the Department of Defense?

Frieda Takamura 00:16:44

Right, Department of Defense, US Department of Defense. Yeah. And then so I came here to the US mainland, as we would say, for college.

Angie Bartels 00:16:53

I see, okay. Did your family remain in Japan at that point, or did they--

Frieda Takamura 00:16:59

No, they were in Japan. But I went to the University of Hawaii first, for a year, and then eventually finished my college here in Washington State, in Walla Walla at Whitman. Whitman College.

Angie Bartels 00:17:12

Okay, okay.

Karen Richter 00:17:13

What did you study?

Frieda Takamura 00:17:15

So it was, you know, just that kind of--

Angie Bartels 00:17:18

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:17:18

--pattern that was a little different from most JA's, Japanese Americans here.

Karen Richter 00:17:26

So a lot of transitioning back and forth?

Frieda Takamura 00:17:28

Oh yeah, all the time.

Angie Bartels 00:17:29

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:17:30

And then my parents were there until my father became the Director of Personnel on the military base, where we lived close to, and we went to DOD schools. We lived in the, you know, in the Japanese economy, but went to DOD schools. And so, even moreso, we were able to get facility in both languages.

Angie Bartels 00:17:52

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:17:53

I just-It's just lucky, you know, if you think about it. But they ended up getting stationed in Germany, so they were in Heidelberg for a number of years. And then when my dad retired, they were in Sacramento, and so closer to where I live now.

Angie Bartels 00:18:09

Yeah, great.

Frieda Takamura 00:18:10

So it was just back and forth.

Karen Richter 00:18:12

Back and forth. Right, right.

Frieda Takamura 00:18:14

My family--his family--still lives in Hawaii, the now extended. Only one of his siblings is still alive.

Angie Bartels 00:18:25

Wow.

Karen Richter 00:18:25

With all that travel, do you find yourself wanting to be just a home person?

Frieda Takamura 00:18:29

Yes!

Karen Richter 00:18:29

And not move around too much anymore?

Frieda Takamura 00:18:31

Absolutely. And I did a lot of traveling from my work when I was working, too, so it was like, okay, yeah, I am not the person who wants to go on cruises around the world. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:18:44

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:18:44

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:18:44

I'm happy to be here, yes.

Karen Richter 00:18:48

(laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:18:48

(laughs) Yeah. So tell us a little bit about college and your experiences there, and, kind of, what started shaping your kind of direction that you were going to take in life and the work that you sought out to do.

Frieda Takamura 00:19:10

Well, you know, I mean, the time period, of course, in US, you know, social development, if you will, was that women, of course, went into teaching or became nurses, and so I chose teaching and got my teaching certificate at Whitman and had a really good education there because it's such a--it's a strong school academically, you know, so I was very fortunate. But when I first got there, I had never heard of Whitman, but interestingly enough, I you know, I was--like I said, I went to the University of Hawaii for a year first, and much of that was because I was a girl. You know, my parents did not want me to venture too far and at least family was in Hawaii, you know, all of that. The president--then-president--of Whitman was at the University of Washington recruiting for Whitman, you know, which I thought was, it's probably a boondoggle for him, actually, but you know, (inaudible) I set it aside. But anyway--and I had this dream of going to the mainland, you know, so when I saw, you know, some notice that said there was a president from Washington state that was recruiting students I thought, "Oh, just go in and see what's up." Well, I didn't know anything about, really, Washington state. I didn't know anything about Walla Walla, that's for sure. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:20:52

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:20:52

But interestingly enough, even back then, and I'm talking 19 what? You know, early 60s--no--mid 60s, yeah. '66, '67, right in there. They were already trying to, quote, "diversify" their student body, you know, so they were actively looking for what we now call students of color, of course, to come to Whitman. And it's a good thing I didn't know anything about it because going to Walla Walla was--

Angie Bartels 00:21:22

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:21:22

(laughs) I can't imagine

Frieda Takamura 00:21:23

I can remember looking out of the plane and seeing, you know, the amber waves of grain, just like the song!

Angie Bartels 00:21:30

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:21:32

And thinking, "Oh, my God, what have I gotten myself into?" There was nothing.

Karen Richter 00:21:39

That was before wine, I think, right?

Frieda Takamura 00:21:40

Oh, way before wine, it was just nothing but wheat fields, you know, and yet it was a very prosperous community, right, because the wheat fields really brought in good income with a lot of rich people.

Angie Bartels 00:21:51

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:21:52

Which is, I think, one of the reasons why Whitman College was able to stay there.

Angie Bartels 00:21:57

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:21:58

And grow. But anyway, yeah, it was culture shock for me.

Karen Richter 00:22:03

I bet.

Frieda Takamura 00:22:04

But it was at Whitman, that I got my first I think, real--and of course, this was the time of the Vietnam War was coming to a close, you know, Bobby Kennedy, I mean all of those things were, as part of my consciousness, you know, and I think that whole--and despite what my father taught us about not rocking the boat, you gotta out-white the whites, you gotta, you know, make sure that you don't stand out too badly, you know, all of those things--I think he still instilled in us a real sense of social justice because of his experience. And it wasn't until much, much later that we could talk about it because he was always so worried for us. And of course, he also lived through the McCarthy hearings, right?

Angie Bartels 00:22:54

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:22:54

And so that was another piece of always caution. But yet, there was something that made him, that made all three of us, you know, fight injustice. And my mother was also a very strong with that, as much as she wasn't supposed to, she did talk about that. And she, you know, she was brave, and that she married an American, you know, back then, because it was not something that was done readily. And so that was my early introduction, if you will, to a consciousness of social justice.

Angie Bartels 00:23:33

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:23:34

And then, you know, I taught in Walla Walla for four years.

Angie Bartels 00:23:39

So you found a community that you could connect with and make friends with?

Frieda Takamura 00:23:45

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:23:45

Who were your friends?

Frieda Takamura 00:23:47

Well, they were college connected first, and then they were kitchen connected to my profession. And so when I first started teaching in Walla Walla, I was probably the only teacher of color there, would be my guess. I mean, the school--my school--definitely, you know, where I taught. And then from there, I'd gotten married, in the meanwhile, and then went to Indiana, and taught in Indiana for four years.

Karen Richter 00:24:18

Where in Indiana?

Frieda Takamura 00:24:20

Crawfordsville, Indiana, which is--Well actually, it was in West Lafayette, which is where Purdue was, because my then-spouse was going to graduate school in West Lafayette at Purdue. And so I taught in Crawfordsville for four years, another culture shock. But then again, I've always been blessed to have a lot of good people around me and you know, people who supported me.

Angie Bartels 00:24:43

Was your spouse, was he Japanese American?

Frieda Takamura 00:24:46

No, he was not.

Angie Bartels 00:24:47

He was Caucasian?

Frieda Takamura 00:24:48

Right, right.

Karen Richter 00:24:49

What were you teaching?

Frieda Takamura 00:24:51

Language arts, English.

Frieda Takamura 00:24:52

Yeah. That was my major. English language arts. And so I taught there for four years, and then he came back for college at the UW [University of Washington], so I came and then I began teaching in Renton at the high school, at Lindbergh High School, and lived in--I mean, I still live in Renton, you know, in the same area.

Karen Richter 00:24:52

English?

Angie Bartels 00:25:14

Wow, that's great.

Karen Richter 00:25:15

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:25:16

Do you have children?

Frieda Takamura 00:25:17

No, not biological children. My now-spouse (laughs) has three, three boys.

Angie Bartels 00:25:24

Okay.

Frieda Takamura 00:25:24

And so they are all grown up, and we have seven grandchildren.

Angie Bartels 00:25:29

Great.

Frieda Takamura 00:25:29

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:25:30

Yeah, wonderful, wonderful. So, let's see, (pauses) tell us about events, other events in your life that kind of helped shaped your political views.

Frieda Takamura 00:25:51

Well, while I was teaching in Renton, I became active with the Education Association, the teachers' union. And it was kind of an interesting phenomenon because when I was teaching in Indiana, there was a teachers union, but since it was not a--it was a right-to-work state. And so, you know, you didn't have to belong.

Frieda Takamura 00:26:15

Yeah, but I happened to be in a building that was very active. And so I knew of okay, what the union was doing as far as negotiating salaries, as much as it could, you know, working conditions, etc. But then when I moved here, ironically, the year that I was hired, was the Renton teachers were on strike. And so my first day when I was supposed to report to work at the high school, the principal had called and said, "Okay, there's all these picket signs out there, you know, but come around into the back entrance, and you can come into the building." And I knew that was not right. (laughs)

Karen Richter 00:26:15

Still is.

Frieda Takamura 00:26:58

I don't care how new I was and I don't care how much I needed the job, I knew that was not right. So instead, I went and joined the pickets, you know, went on the lines. And so kind of, you know, from that first day, they knew I was okay. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:26:59

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:26:59

(laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:27:08

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:27:11

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:27:16

But then, you know, it just led me to think about what an administrator would do to do that to your own workers, you know, how wrong that was. But anyway, long story short, I became very active in the union, and eventually became president of the union and led Renton into the first strike after that strike. And so...

Karen Richter 00:27:42

And what was that for? What was the strike for?

Frieda Takamura 00:27:44

Well, hours wages (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:27:45

The usual, right. But again, you know, I've always maintained that if you have enlightened administrators, people aren't going to strike. You know, nobody wants to strike. But as--since I was elected president, I was just kind of thrown into the--I had been on the bargaining team and all of the things that one does with the union. So you know, that was a real trial by fire for me, but I was very fortunate in that there was a real strong membership and a very weak--as far as i was concerned--administration. So anyway, then from there, I went to work for the Washington Education Association, WEA, and I was their director of --no, not director--Human and Civil Rights Program Coordinator.

Angie Bartels 00:27:45

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:27:45

(laugh)

Angie Bartels 00:28:41

Wow.

Karen Richter 00:28:41

Wow.

Frieda Takamura 00:28:42

And so I was in charge pretty much of all the equity programs at WEA till I retired. And then since I've retired, I've--well, there's PSARA, of course. But my first love, of course, is public education. And so actually, most of the work, if you will, that I do now is around education--education policy. So I sit on some state committees, especially around closing the education opportunity gap for kids of color, students of color here in this state.

Angie Bartels 00:29:20

Wonderful, wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:29:21

Yeah, so that's a big part. And then I also am a trustee at Renton Technical College. So I dabble there, too.

Angie Bartels 00:29:30

Great, yeah. Have you worked at all with Tony Lee?

Frieda Takamura 00:29:32

Of course, oh yes.

Angie Bartels 00:29:35

He's my husband.

Frieda Takamura 00:29:36

Oh, that's where we've met! (laughs) Of course.

Angie Bartels 00:29:41

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:29:42

Please give him my best.

Angie Bartels 00:29:43

I will, I will for sure. For sure, I will. But I mean--

Frieda Takamura 00:29:47

That's where we've met!

Angie Bartels 00:29:49

That was his most recent issue was the closing the--

Frieda Takamura 00:29:53

Right opportunity gap.

Angie Bartels 00:29:55

Opportunity gap, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:29:57

Yes, so it all, you know--and of course, I had worked with Tony and many, many others, right.

Angie Bartels 00:29:57

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:29:57

Around social justice, especially when he was with--was in Fremont, then it was--anyway...

Angie Bartels 00:30:07

Solid ground.

Frieda Takamura 00:30:08

Yeah, yeah, solid ground. And so our circles had crossed--and then of course being from the same community.

Angie Bartels 00:30:13

Yeah, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:30:14

The API [Asian and Pacific Islander] community.

Angie Bartels 00:30:16

Right, right. Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:30:17

So yeah, long time.

Angie Bartels 00:30:19

Yeah. Did you have any involvement in the API when they started doing their lobbying in Olympia?

Angie Bartels 00:30:29

Oh, great.

Frieda Takamura 00:30:29

Oh yes.

Frieda Takamura 00:30:30

Oh yes.

Angie Bartels 00:30:30

Can we can you tell me anything about like what you did, because I--

Frieda Takamura 00:30:33

Not as much as Tony! (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:30:38

(laughs) It's your (inaudible)

Frieda Takamura 00:30:38

Right, right. In my area, because there's just education, you know, it was always part of the mix.

Angie Bartels 00:30:46

Yeah

Frieda Takamura 00:30:47

In fact, gosh, I can't even remember when the first year was, you know, when we went down there, the whole education arena was such that attention was beginning to be paid, that there was a huge gap of achievement amongst communities of color, primarily African American, Latino. But what people didn't realize--or, you know, this system, if you will, public education system--didn't realize was that this wasn't just limited to communities of color; that indeed, it was systemic, you know, across the board. And so, I was one of the very early people who--and of course, back then, it was called the achievement gap, you know--was involved in the studies to really take a look at each community's, you know, achievement--opportunity to gap.

Angie Bartels 00:31:50

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:31:50

And, of course, I was with the Asian group.

Angie Bartels 00:31:54

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:31:54

And one of the issues that were--Tony and I are, you know, we were working around--was that there was such little data about our Asian community. In other words, you know, we were always the model minorities, you know, nobody had to worry about us, except that if you started to look at the disaggregated data, we had, you know, immigrants, big time, right, Vietnamese, and all those immigrants coming in; language issues, because, you know, having to learn a new language. So I was fortunate enough to be in on that, you know, at the very beginning--

Karen Richter 00:32:33

The first wave.

Frieda Takamura 00:32:34

Yes, the research that was being done, and community agitation, if you will, you know, to bring attention to our educational issues. And so, I've worked very closely with, of course, with Sharon Tomiko Santos, you know, Representative Santos, and we still continue to work with that. But anyway, what came of it was that this group that I--this committee that I work with now is looking at what each of the different communities can do to close the gap. And, you know, again, our gap in the Asian community is nowhere what it is in the African American community or in the Latino community, but what we have really brought to light is the gap that exists like, for example, in the Pacific Islander community.

Angie Bartels 00:32:34

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:33:23

And so you know, all those issues are ones that because of Tony and Karen and--I mean, not Karen, before but named Diane. Karen is Diane's older--anyway, sister. Yes, we--

Angie Bartels 00:33:23

Right.

Karen Richter 00:33:37

Lua Pritchard

Frieda Takamura 00:33:38

Oh yes, all of us have been involved. And so I've been kind of--because I'm a CAPAA--Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs--appointee. I've been able to, quote, "represent" the Asian community at the state level.

Karen Richter 00:33:54

What are the commissions that you're referring to that you're on, Frieda?

Angie Bartels 00:33:54

Wonderful

Frieda Takamura 00:33:57

We have ethnic commissions that represent the communities, that actually are a liaison between the governor's office and the community.

Karen Richter 00:34:11

Okay.

Frieda Takamura 00:34:12

So there's a Commission on Hispanic Affairs, there's the Asian Pacific Islander Commission. There's also an African American Commission, and then there's the governor's Office of Indian Affairs. So these are the different broad stroke representatives of the different communities, diverse communities here in Washington.

Karen Richter 00:34:43

And are you on all of them?

Frieda Takamura 00:34:44

No, no, I'm not on any of them now. I just sit on the said policy committee, but I was on CAPAA, yes.

Frieda Takamura 00:34:50

Yeah. And so you know, CAPAA is a big voice down there, working with, you know, the meetings down in Olympia, too. So, you know, most of my activities now in the social justice arena, if you will, are with my own Asian community in specifically the area of public education.

Karen Richter 00:34:50

Yeah, great.

Angie Bartels 00:35:14

Okay, wow.

Karen Richter 00:35:15

So that's still in your heart.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:18

Oh, yeah. And it's what I know most, best.

Angie Bartels 00:35:21

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:22

So I try to use my expertise and my experience, having gone through the system.

Angie Bartels 00:35:30

Right, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:31

So it's--

Angie Bartels 00:35:31

Exactly from a teacher--

Frieda Takamura 00:35:33

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:35:34

To a union leader.

Karen Richter 00:35:35

A student first.

Angie Bartels 00:35:36

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:37

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:35:37

Student, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:38

Yeah, and so it's been very, you know, every time I think we take a step forward, of course, we take on back (laughs). Back and forth, it's like that. But such as the arc of history, right?

Angie Bartels 00:35:52

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:35:52

So we're hoping that, you know--and we have, we have made--I have to keep reminding myself that other states come to Washington to find out how we did it. You know, so...

Karen Richter 00:36:06

That's quite a compliment.

Frieda Takamura 00:36:07

Yeah, it is. But then when you look at the day to day, right?

Angie Bartels 00:36:11

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:36:11

It's like, oh, my God, there's so much more to do.

Karen Richter 00:36:15

I know, that's so true.

Frieda Takamura 00:36:17

Yeah, so it's never done.

Angie Bartels 00:36:20

Yeah, no. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?

Frieda Takamura 00:36:26

Well, I'm not done yet. (laughs)

Karen Richter 00:36:29

(laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:36:29

(laughs) Well, so far?

Frieda Takamura 00:36:33

Probably this work in policy, being a part of the group, the wave, if you will, of making changes in education policy that affects our students of color.

Angie Bartels 00:36:48

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:36:49

And I say it's a team because it is, it's a team effort. You know, I mean, none of this, of course, would have happened if it weren't for leadership, like with Sharon, Sharon Tomiko Santos, and folks, you know, who have really been able to represent us in Olympia to make changes, you know....

Karen Richter 00:37:11

To keep our accounts.

Frieda Takamura 00:37:12

To keep the pressure on, yeah. So that I think I'm most proud of, that I've been at least a part of this movement, if you will. So, yeah, keeping at it.

Angie Bartels 00:37:27

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:37:29

And there's more to come always. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:37:30

More to come, always, always. Because there's so many different pieces to it, right?

Frieda Takamura 00:37:35

You know, I mean, like I was just meeting in Olympia and there's a report that is looking at social-emotional learning, in other words, how influences, you know, affect children, and how they learn, and how schools can do beyond, or have to do beyond the basic academics, if you will, for students to be an environment to learn. And so there are all these, quote, "benchmarks" that have been set, you know, and what students are supposed to be able to do and da-da, but in looking at it, we find that it's really culturally biased. And so, you know, when a student goes to school, it works out great if what the kid is learning in school is the same as what they're learning at home. But if it's not, you know, there's a huge disconnect.

Angie Bartels 00:37:35

Oh, yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:38:30

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:38:31

But yet, at the same time, schools are the best hope, right, to make sure that students can succeed.

Angie Bartels 00:38:39

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:38:39

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:38:40

So it's many layers, very complex, but there's a lot of good allies out there who really care.

Angie Bartels 00:38:49

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:38:50

And so--and people who don't know that they're not doing the right thing. You know, that--I think people like I am and my other colleagues who work on this committee are pushing, you know, to make things better. And like I said, we are so much ahead of other states, but my goodness, we have a long ways to go.

Angie Bartels 00:39:15

Yeah, so true.

Karen Richter 00:39:18

Well, we're grateful for your work for sure.

Angie Bartels 00:39:21

Yeah, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:39:22

To this, my honor. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:39:26

What surprises you, Frieda, about I mean, after all the work you've done and all the effort you've put into closing the education gap and in the inequities in our society and, mostly in terms of education... (pauses) I mean, you know, because when you live through so much, you feel like nothing surprises me sometimes. But then we all say, you know, from day to day, wow. That really--

Karen Richter 00:39:58

Didn't see that coming.

Angie Bartels 00:39:59

Yeah. Didn't see that coming.

Frieda Takamura 00:40:00

All the time. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:40:03

(laughs) Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:40:03

You know, in broad strokes, I think what surprises me is that how many times we have to keep doing this. You know?

Angie Bartels 00:40:11

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:40:11

I mean, it's like, again, in education, I feel like, okay, we got through that hurdle. We now have legislation that says schools are supposed to do this. And then yet, it's still going on. You know, people still aren't doing it. So that surprises me that things are so slow, and every time you take a step forward, you gotta take two steps back before you can go forward again. You know, that's on my most pessimistic days. And then what surprises me, too, is how easy it is to fall back into those patterns.

Angie Bartels 00:40:47

Exactly. I think that's one of the reasons we don't move forward.

Frieda Takamura 00:40:51

Right.

Angie Bartels 00:40:51

Because the way we've pulled back.

Frieda Takamura 00:40:54

Yeah and look at the national, you know, things going on at the national level, and then think, okay, how does that all trickle down? You know, I mean, for education, it would be things like harassment issues, you know, we hear we've been so far ahead, and then we have Washington, D.C. telling us, "Oh, you don't have to worry about that."

Karen Richter 00:41:12

Yeah, we're working on Title X.

Frieda Takamura 00:41:15

Right, exactly!

Karen Richter 00:41:16

It's crazy stuff, I know, I hear you.

Frieda Takamura 00:41:17

And I am so glad that we are in a state that still maintains what's right. However, it is also so easy to lose, right? I mean, you can really feel like okay, you can't just sit back. And that surprises me that, you know, after decades of doing this work, how you have to keep doing it over and over, you know? No wonder people get tired.

Frieda Takamura 00:41:18

Yeah (laughs) and burnt out.

Frieda Takamura 00:41:48

Yes, yes.

Angie Bartels 00:41:50

What do you do to kind of keep yourself refreshed, so to kind of counterbalance that feeling of burnout?

Frieda Takamura 00:42:02

I'm a voracious reader, so I read quite a bit. I also find my--our home in Renton as a sanctuary, it's a place I go to really deep, you know, breathe deeply and just find solace. We've been living in Renton long enough that we own property. And so we've got, you know, about three acres or so that's kind of like a mini farm, almost, you know. So we've--my spouse and I find delight in watching the silly chickens.

Angie Bartels 00:42:39

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:42:40

You have chickens? Oh, that's fantastic!

Frieda Takamura 00:42:42

Oh yeah, and they're new chickens, and I mean, new-ish chickens, and so it's been--and they've imprinted with us. And they have imprinted with our 130 pound dog.

Angie Bartels 00:42:53

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:42:53

Oh you're kidding!

Frieda Takamura 00:42:54

Oh, it is just a riot. So you know, things like that, right?

Karen Richter 00:42:57

Simple things that are lovely.

Frieda Takamura 00:42:59

And so he goes, the dog goes running out there, and the chickens come running to him and it's just--it's--
(laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:43:04

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:43:05

And we've never had chickens like that before, so it is.. (pauses) But it's stuff like that, you know, really simple things.

Angie Bartels 00:43:12

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:43:13

That give me solace and good friends, you know, people that I can reach out to and find comfort with. So it's actually a pretty good life, actually. Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:43:30

Great. That's great. Good.

Karen Richter 00:43:34

How did you find PSARA?

Frieda Takamura 00:43:36

Robby [Robert Stern]. (laughs)

Karen Richter 00:43:38

Of course. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:43:41

Yeah, Robbie, and I go way back.

Karen Richter 00:43:43

Oh, is that right?

Frieda Takamura 00:43:43

Yes, in the social justice world works.

Karen Richter 00:43:46

Makes sense, right, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:43:48

And, you know, I cannot remember how we met or anything, but we've been fighting this good fight in different arenas for years, and I know Robby goes way back with Tony, too. I mean, you know, it's just all of those different levels.

Angie Bartels 00:44:02

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:44:04

But Robby was with the Labor Council, you know, and I first met him.

Karen Richter 00:44:07

That's where you met him?

Frieda Takamura 00:44:08

Yeah, we were both involved in fight the right kind of activities, if you will.

Karen Richter 00:44:16

Sure. Was that when you were in the teachers' union?

Frieda Takamura 00:44:18

Yep, starting with the union, and then, you know, moving on. And so, yeah. And then when Robby was getting close to retirement, right. I think Will Perry had talked to him into, right, being involved in PSARA. And Robby is one of those good examples of a real ally. You know, from very early on, he found it really necessary to look at PSARA and okay, how do we reflect, indeed, the elder population of the state of Washington, you know?

Angie Bartels 00:44:30

Right, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:44:48

And as good as unions have been for social justice, there's also a very bitter side of unions, right? Where they--I mean, I look at this room and every time I come here and I look at these pictures and I think [gagging noise] because they're all white people.

Karen Richter 00:45:11

Exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:45:13

They're all white people! You know...

Karen Richter 00:45:15

And they're all men.

Frieda Takamura 00:45:16

Yes, yes. And they're all men. And so this was the history of the labor movement. So, you know, and it's better now.

Karen Richter 00:45:25

Well, that's why the Labor Archives [Labor Archives of Washington] were really interested in us doing interviews with people of color, and women in particular, and wanted us to really focus on that, because they had, Conor [Conor Casey] said, lots and lots and lots of histories of older white men. And that he knew and as do we, that there's a lot more to it than that.

Frieda Takamura 00:45:49

Oh, of course.

Karen Richter 00:45:50

So that's what his interest is. And we said, "Of course, yeah, we'll be glad to do that."

Frieda Takamura 00:45:55

Right, right. And it is taking me a long time to reconcile myself to that, you know, that the labor movement, which touts itself being, you know, the social justice proponents, and yet, and especially for Asians in this state, you know, they were responsible for keeping the Exclusion Act, right, the Chinese Exclusion Act, getting the--putting the Japanese into camps. I mean, the labor unions were right there, you know?

Angie Bartels 00:46:23

Yes. Defending--

Karen Richter 00:46:24

You had to be white.

Frieda Takamura 00:46:25

And so, you know, it's like, okay, you did it to us once, so you got a long ways to go before you can prove to us that, you know, you're not that way anymore.

Angie Bartels 00:46:35

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:46:36

And but those are--that's what, the institutional memory, if you will?

Karen Richter 00:46:41

Of course.

Angie Bartels 00:46:41

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:46:42

Racial memory that we all carry with us.

Angie Bartels 00:46:44

Yes, of course.

Frieda Takamura 00:46:45

And so, you know, when I meet people like Robby, I mean--and Robby and I, you know--I mean, I give him such a ration all the time. But you gotta grab on to the allies, and say, "Okay, what can we do, to work together?"

Karen Richter 00:47:00

Absolutely.

Frieda Takamura 00:47:00

Which is one of the reasons why I like PSARA so much, it's because, you know, I think there's a real allyship there.

Angie Bartels 00:47:08

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:47:09

It really feels like that to me, too.

Frieda Takamura 00:47:10

Yes, and if not as who, right?

Karen Richter 00:47:16

That's right, for sure.

Frieda Takamura 00:47:17

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:47:18

For sure.

Angie Bartels 00:47:20

So what do you feel like is your--what's your greatest hope for what we can do, what will--what good will come?

Frieda Takamura 00:47:32

My greatest hope rests in the young people. You know, in my community, in the Japanese American community, in the Asian community, in the Pacific Islander community, there's a whole slew of young people who are coming up, who are so far ahead of where I was at their age. So that's my greatest hope is that they do not lose, lose the fire, lose the enthusiasm, lose the wisdom that they already have, you know, to keep pushing this struggle ahead, so that, indeed, things really do look better. And so that's my biggest hope. And I see flickers, you know, in my early days, since working as some human civil rights coordinator at WEA. WEA very

bravely took on all the LGBT issues, you know, because this was, in fact, in the early days when young people were dying of AIDS.

Karen Richter 00:48:30

In the 80's?

Frieda Takamura 00:48:32

Yes, there were certain--and 90's, too,

Karen Richter 00:48:34

Yes, 90's, right, that's right.

Frieda Takamura 00:48:35

There was such a, you know, an ignorance of LGBT issues. And so anyway, I was fortunate enough, again, to be a part of some safe schools issues, you know, here in, especially in Seattle, and doing that work and being part of the Safe Schools Coalition, and in helping develop curricula to make schools safe, do, you know, all the anti-bully stuff in the early times, I was part of that whole movement, and then to meet with a lot of LGBT young people who now tell me, you know, "I've never been in the closet." That's hope.

Angie Bartels 00:49:16

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:49:17

That's hope realized. Because my age, every LGBT person I knew, well maybe, with the exception of two...

Angie Bartels 00:49:27

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:49:27

Had to spend their lives in the closet. And so isn't that wonderful?

Angie Bartels 00:49:27

Yes, it is.

Karen Richter 00:49:27

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:49:30

And so parents are supportive, you know, big deal.

Angie Bartels 00:49:36

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:49:37

So, you know, if kids are color could all say that, too?

Angie Bartels 00:49:41

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:49:42

And it will happen to intermarriage and mixed race and I hope all of that.

Angie Bartels 00:49:46

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:49:47

So that's my hope is that.

Angie Bartels 00:49:48

That's great. Yeah, yeah. And, and I think, you know, we--that's true. You know, LGBTQ kids here in this area feel freer, but it's not so true in other parts of the country.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:04

That's right, that's right.

Angie Bartels 00:50:04

Because I know someone who was just telling me recently he's from a small town in Kansas where, you know, when he walks down the street with his shoulder bag on his arm, everybody looks at him. And he says, "That's why I want to live in Seattle, because I can just be who I am. And nobody does a double take."

Frieda Takamura 00:50:27

That's right.

Angie Bartels 00:50:27

And so,

Frieda Takamura 00:50:29

So maybe those little baby steps? (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:50:31

It is baby steps, it is, but it--

Karen Richter 00:50:33

But it's different.

Angie Bartels 00:50:34

But it's--things are changing?

Frieda Takamura 00:50:36

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:50:36

They are changing.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:37

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:50:38

And that's probably one of the areas where we really see it.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:41

Yes, I think so, too.

Angie Bartels 00:50:43

So wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:43

Yeah. And you're that's how I met Bob Shimabukuro years ago, because he was doing HIV/AIDS work. And I at--still at the union and--

Karen Richter 00:50:53

I didn't know that.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:54

And Bob's brother died of HIV/AIDS.

Karen Richter 00:50:55

I did not know that, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:50:57

And so Bob was very early on doing LGBT ally work. And so-- in our community, in the Asian communities.

Karen Richter 00:51:07

Right there.

Frieda Takamura 00:51:08

And so, you know, we are also very lucky that we have a history of activism here, and so many of us, you know, before I knew it got old--

Angie Bartels 00:51:20

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:51:22

Still continue, right? So if we can keep those maybe not two steps back, but maybe just one step. (laughs)

Karen Richter 00:51:29

Or maybe a half. (laughs) We're not gonna take a whole, we're just gonna take a half.

Angie Bartels 00:51:29

(laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:51:34

Yeah. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:51:35

So you know, I mean, that's my hope, is that we always have hope.

Angie Bartels 00:51:39

Yeah, definitely, definitely. It's so important, so very important. Yeah, great. Is there anything you would like to add about your life, your thoughts, your work, just for the record? Anything you want to add for the record--

Karen Richter 00:52:00

That we didn't perhaps touch upon?

Angie Bartels 00:52:01

Yeah, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:52:04

It's hard to know, right? (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:52:05

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:52:05

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:52:05

I mean, you know, really. Yeah, I think I probably should mention that, for my generation--for our generation, my generation--there aren't too many of us who took it upon ourselves to speak out the way we do, you know, because of generational, because of cultural, because of gender, you know, all of those.

Karen Richter 00:52:31

Yup.

Angie Bartels 00:52:31

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:52:32

And I think the--you know, the--it's almost like here in the Seattle area and the Pacific Northwest, especially in Seattle, we're so lucky because there are so many women, older women who from the beginning, you know, have been working hard to equalize the scenery, if you will.

Karen Richter 00:52:57

Yeah, there are a lot of women, particular elected officials--

Frieda Takamura 00:53:01

Yes.

Karen Richter 00:53:02

That other states don't have.

Angie Bartels 00:53:03

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:53:04

That's right.

Angie Bartels 00:53:04

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:53:04

Just that makes a difference, too.

Frieda Takamura 00:53:06

It does make, it does. And so maybe what did it, you know--what's the saying about success breeds success, you know, that you--that it's a fertile ground to do things here in this area, but again, having to be diligent and vigilant and diligent at all times.

Karen Richter 00:53:27

That's true, that's true, for sure.

Frieda Takamura 00:53:31

But I'll be driving home and I'm sure I'll think of 10,000 other things, I'm sorry.

Karen Richter 00:53:36

(laughs) That's alright.

Angie Bartels 00:53:37

(laughs) Well we can always add it.

Karen Richter 00:53:38

We did two parts for Robby, we'll be glad to do two parts for you. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:53:41

(laughs) We can do a part two.

Frieda Takamura 00:53:43

Yeah, well Robby, he's, you know, what you call it?

Karen Richter 00:53:45

Loquacious?

Frieda Takamura 00:53:46

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:53:46

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:53:46

Yes. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:53:47

I was not going to be so kind. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:53:54

He also got himself into a lot of trouble with his (inaudible) (laughs).

Karen Richter 00:53:58

But that's a whole other story.

Angie Bartels 00:53:59

But that's a whole other story, yeah. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:54:02

Bless his heart.

Angie Bartels 00:54:03

Yes! Bless his heart, standing up, and doing that, and putting himself on the line, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:54:09

And you know, when you do, like, if you do Frankie Irigon, you make sure and make him talk about the feats of his spouse. Because Frankie gets--this as an aside in publishing--but, you know, Frankie gets a lot of credit in our community, and rightfully so, because he has been dyed in the wool activist. But the real strength is Felicita. And you can tell him, Frieda said!

Angie Bartels 00:54:33

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:54:33

(laughs) I will, I'm writing it down!

Angie Bartels 00:54:35

Yeah, she's writing it down, yeah!

Frieda Takamura 00:54:38

And again, that was often the case, right? Where, you know, women who stood in the shadows when--

Angie Bartels 00:54:43

Yeah, that's exactly.

Karen Richter 00:54:44

Yeah, they were smart and intelligent. They spoke up, but not loudly.

Frieda Takamura 00:54:49

Yeah, and probably--

Angie Bartels 00:54:50

And didn't get the credit

Frieda Takamura 00:54:52

Exactly, that's it. And they were probably smarter than... (laughs) I could go down the list but I won't. (laughs)

Karen Richter 00:54:59

(laughs) Okay, I have a note right here.

Angie Bartels 00:54:59

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:55:09

Well I mean, it's just like Garry [Garry Owens] talking about Cindy Domingo, you know, his spouse. Cindy is another one.

Karen Richter 00:55:10

I know.

Angie Bartels 00:55:10

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:55:16

Oh my goodness.

Karen Richter 00:55:20

We have her on a list to do, too.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:22

Oh good.

Angie Bartels 00:55:22

Yes.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:23

Because she is--and then while you're at it, you should also talk to her brother Nemesio Domingo, right.

Karen Richter 00:55:29

Yep, there are so many people in our community.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:31

But isn't that cool?

Karen Richter 00:55:32

It's wonderful, I mean, it really is wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:34

Right?

Karen Richter 00:55:35

Just who we know.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:35

Right! So it is very, very cool.

Angie Bartels 00:55:39

Right, it's wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:39

And then, of course, as we're all getting older, we must capture, right?

Frieda Takamura 00:55:44

We don't want to lose these wonderful stories.

Angie Bartels 00:55:44

Oh, yes.

Karen Richter 00:55:45

We have capture this, yeah, exactly.

Frieda Takamura 00:55:47

Yeah. Because it's one of the regrets that I have, you know, is that--and I think every generation does it--"Why didn't I ask dad this?" or, "Why didn't I ask my mom..."

Angie Bartels 00:55:55

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:55:56

That's right.

Angie Bartels 00:55:56

Right, I know.

Karen Richter 00:55:58

I was just gonna do some old family photos and realize that my cousin and I are the elders in our family, and we don't know the answers to so many questions.

Angie Bartels 00:56:07

Yes.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:07

Or even identify pictures.

Karen Richter 00:56:09

Yeah, who are these people?

Angie Bartels 00:56:10

Right.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:11

Yeah, we were really lucky because it was, when my father was making--he actually came to live with me, and so he spent his last three years living with me here. But because of the move, you know, boxes and boxes of pictures, right? But we were lucky enough to sit my father and, at that time, three of his sisters were still alive, so we sat them down, and made them identify all the pictures.

Angie Bartels 00:56:37

Great.

Karen Richter 00:56:38

So now you have a history of who all these people are.

Angie Bartels 00:56:41

Right, yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:42

But then of course, you find more pictures, but you know... (laughs) But you gotta capture that moment.

Karen Richter 00:56:50

That's a remarkable thing you were able to do.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:51

Yes, yes.

Angie Bartels 00:56:53

That's wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:53

For sure.

Angie Bartels 00:56:53

Really wonderful.

Frieda Takamura 00:56:56

Anyway, thank you for your indulgence and your patience.

Karen Richter 00:56:59

Oh, thank you for volunteering to help improve our oral history project.

Angie Bartels 00:57:04

Yes. And thank you for the work that you've done throughout your life and the contributions that you've made to education and to our society as a whole, because every one that fights like you do does push us forward, most definitely.

Karen Richter 00:57:22

Yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:57:23

I'm sure there's a younger person who looks up and says, "Frieda Takamura inspired me."

Frieda Takamura 00:57:29

(laughs) But then, you know, we also get to the age, I think, where we don't-- I don't care anymore what people--you know, I mean, it's like, when I say something in a meeting that is offensive to, you know, the powers that be I think, "Oh, what are you gonna do fire me?" (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:57:45

(laughs)

Karen Richter 00:57:45

(laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:57:45

So it's kind of freeing.

Karen Richter 00:57:46

You're speaking truth, yeah.

Angie Bartels 00:57:47

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:57:48

My truth, and you know, I mean, so there's that kind of what? Freedom that comes with age. And in my community, elders are still respected, you know, they still have respect for the elders. (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:58:02

(laughs) Oh my God.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:03

Yay! (laughs)

Angie Bartels 00:58:05

That listen. (laughs)

Frieda Takamura 00:58:07

And I'm still, you know, Auntie Frieda to many of them, and so that's good, that's nice.

Karen Richter 00:58:14

Reassuring.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:17

And please, give me my best, Tony.

Angie Bartels 00:58:20

I will.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:22

I miss seeing him.

Angie Bartels 00:58:23

Yeah.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:25

And I'll bet he misses being seen.

Angie Bartels 00:58:27

He does.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:29

I'm glad you're there, though, to support him and be there.

Angie Bartels 00:58:34

Thank you.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:36

And for the work you're doing.

Angie Bartels 00:58:40

All right.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:40

Okay.

Angie Bartels 00:58:41

Okay, so--

Karen Richter 00:58:43

Thank you, I think--

Angie Bartels 00:58:44

Thank you so much.

Karen Richter 00:58:44

And if there's anything more you want us to know, Frieda, we can add it at anytime.

Angie Bartels 00:58:48

Yeah, please send us an email.

Karen Richter 00:58:50

Yeah, no problem at all.

Angie Bartels 00:58:52

Yeah, thank you so much.

Frieda Takamura 00:58:53

Thank you for the opportunity.

Karen Richter 00:58:55

And thank you for the work you're doing with PSARA, with the Race, Gender, and Equity Committee. I think ever since I started attending some of the meetings, it's just--it sort of just is evolving, I can see it happening.

Frieda Takamura 00:59:08

Yes, it is.

Karen Richter 00:59:08

And it's really exciting.

Karen Richter 00:59:10

It really truly is, and that last meeting in particular, I thought was exceptional.

Frieda Takamura 00:59:10

It is.

Frieda Takamura 00:59:15

Yeah.

Karen Richter 00:59:15

Thank you for your part in doing that.

Frieda Takamura 00:59:16

Oh, it's not just me, you know, it's all these different forces coming in, but again, it didn't happen without people like you and Robby, and people who are the allies. Didn't happen without that, so we're in it together.

Karen Richter 00:59:33

That's true.

Angie Bartels 00:59:33

Great, we're in it together, yes.

Frieda Takamura 00:59:36

Okay!

Angie Bartels 00:59:36

Good note! All right, okay. Thank you very much, and thus concludes our interview, okay.